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SUBJECT: USNATO TODAY: READOUT FROM 29 OCTOBER NORTH
ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Classified By: Classified by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes

(C/NF) Summary from the NAC Meeting:

-- AFGHANISTAN: The Secretary General (SYG), Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC), and NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) reported guarded optimism on recent positive developments in Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations. All agreed that the recent Cabinet appointments, particularly the Ministry of Interior, brought in more competent and talented government officials. The SCR discussed several ongoing, uncoordinated reconciliation dialogues, including the Independent Directorate of Local Governance's local reconciliation proposal and a Saudi Arabian initiative to facilitate political discussions between the Government of Afghanistan and Taliban.

-- BALKANS: Ambassador Volker said he was hopeful the U.S. would have a 2.5 million dollars donation for the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) within the next few weeks and an additional 5 million dollars in the spring, and Germany announced an in-kind contribution of 7 million euro. The Secretary General (SYG) reported that EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Solana on 27 October had privately expressed confidence that the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) would be operational throughout Kosovo by December.

-- AFRICA: The NAC received its first operational briefing on Operation ALLIED PROVIDER, the counter-piracy and WFP escort mission being performed by elements of Standing NATO Maritime Group (SNMG) 2 off the Horn of Africa.

-- IRAQ: The SYG observed that it's vital for NATO to ensure the legal continuity of that NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) past the December 31 expiry of the UNSCR. He added that SACEUR has sent him a letter recommending that NATO immediately engage the Iraqi authorities on this issue. The SYG said he will give the NATO International Staff the necessary authority to move forward. The NATO negotiations will be held "in the context" of the ongoing USG-GOI SOFA negotiations and this bilateral SOFA will be the basis for NATO's own agreement, he said.

-- RESPONSE TO TERRORISM: no discussion

-- TRANSFORMATION: The SYG outlined his roadmap for addressing defense transformation issues in the run up to the February Defense Ministerial in Krakow: additional POL-MIL options for the NRF, Reserve Forces, Multi-national Approaches to Capability Development, Innovative Funding Arrangements, Reform of the Defense Planning Processes, PE Review, Missile Defense, work on the Norwegian paper on making NATO more relevant. He stated that this is a very ambitious work plan and that the timelines will be close.

-- STATEMENTS ON POLITICAL TOPICS: France briefed on recent EU events including the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit and a meeting of the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council. The French PermRep also updated on the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Ambassador Volker briefed on the upcoming United Nations Security Council visit to Afghanistan.

--AOB: Slovakia and Bulgaria announced that the accessional protocols for Albania and Croatia have successfully been approved through their respective national procedures. Croatian and Albanian PermReps thanked the two nations and also extended thanks to the U.S. for President Bush,s signature of Albanian and Croatian accession protocols at a White House singing ceremony last week.

END SUMMARY.

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Afghanistan

(C/REL ISAF) Afghanistan: The SYG briefed the Council on Afghan Foreign Minister Spanta,s recent visit to Pakistan. He said the language from the joint communique was much more positive than language used by the two nations several months ago, and the mini-Jirga held by Afghan and Pakistani border tribes was a good indicator of improved bilateral relations. The SYG reported that, based on precedent from the 2004/2005 elections cycle, he responded positively to the OSCE,s request for ISAF in extremis support to a planned November high-level conference in Kabul.

(C/REL ISAF) Chairman of the Military Committee ADM Di Paola described the Military Committee,s (MC) 3-day visit to Afghanistan last week, which included visits with key leaders in Kabul, regional commands, and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Counter-Narcotics Unit. His overall impression was that the situation in Afghanistan was more positive than the press has reported, based on his observations that relations and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan have improved; that the changes in the cabinet have improved government leadership, especially in the Ministry of Interior; and that the training and performance of the Afghan National Army (ANA) is progressing well.

(C/REL ISAF) CMC also commented that although the Afghan National Police (ANP) lag behind the army, the Focused District Development (FDD) program has shown success with sizeable security improvement in targeted localities. He added that today,s requirement at the local level is a paramilitary holding force, rather than the civil police force being trained by EUPOL. The RC-South Commander told the Military Committee that ANA integration in operations is going well. The MoI,s Counter-Narcotics Interdiction Unit, mostly trained by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and private security contractors, is well-trained but small, with force strength of 180 and a ceiling of 300 personnel. CMC added that the unit welcomes any ISAF assistance as it continues to build its capability.

(C/REL ISAF) CMC noted that the first phase of voter

registration has been mostly unopposed by insurgents. UN SRSG Kai Eide complained to him that UNAMA does not have the numbers of personnel or expertise to fully coordinate civilian-military activities. Kabul officials told the CMC that civilian casualties cause a strong negative impact, but COMISAF's recent efforts have been appreciated. COMISAF highlighted the need for temporary reinforcements to support elections and requested that Allies fill shortfalls according to a new Combined Joint Statement of Requirements.

(C/REL ISAF) Update from NATO SCR Gentilini: Ambassador Gentilini said politics are now dominating a dynamic dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, a welcome development. Karzai and FM Spanta were much more positive about Pakistan in recent meetings, and Gentilini saw the tribal mini-Jirga as a sign of confidence-building between the nations. SCR shared cautious optimism with UNAMA and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) about Phase I voter registration. He said the IEC is a functioning organization with no systemic resistance. Phase II preparation is on track, but may be more difficult to implement because it includes main cities (Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i Sharif). Gentilini said the Afghan Government still needs to set a precise date for elections and provide a logistics delivery plan for polling sites. SCR asked NATO to continue to deliver a unified message that elections will happen in 2009, and ISAF will support them.

(C/REL ISAF) SCR described the reconciliation process as in

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an exploratory phase with lots of talk and little action.

He identified a lack of strategic vision or consensus to move forward, but said NATO's message should stipulate that any reconciliation process be Afghan-led, principled, and based on strong consensus. He emphasized that reconciliation is not a shortcut to peace, and the Afghan Government must approach reconciliation from a position of strength. Later, the SCR noted several ongoing, parallel discussions with insurgents including the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) approach to rebuild original tribal structures and enable governors to approach local insurgents; the Saudi Arabia-hosted dialogue. This initiative's outcome is opaque, Gentilini commented, and it is too early to discern who is participating, whom they represent, and what they are proposing.

(C/REL ISAF) Gentilini said the WFP estimates food supplies will last through February, provided current distributions go smoothly. The IC needs to pledge more food support to cover March-onward. The SCR noted ISAF is doing a tremendous job to support food convoys, but cautioned against highlighting NATO's role publicly given NGO sensitivities about being seen closely cooperating with the military.

(C/REL ISAF) On the recent Cabinet reshuffling, Gentilini said the new appointees are more competent, but he added that ethnic imbalance in government may create political pressure for additional Cabinet changes. New Minister of Interior Atmar asked Gentilini to approach NATO and nations about how they might help with police mentoring.

(C/NF) PermReps asked a variety of questions on Pakistan including the recent Pakistani Parliament resolution to talk to militants and stop military action inside the tribal areas, and potential NATO humanitarian relief following the Quetta earthquake. The SYG responded that Pakistan had not yet asked for any assistance and Pakistan may be sensitive about receiving outside aid. In light of Pakistan's recent decision to arm tribal militias in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the Canadian PermRep asked for clarification on ISAF's assessment/policy on arming tribes in Afghanistan. The SCR said local community engagement should focus on empowering tribes to reinvigorate their authority rather than arming them. Several Ambassadors addressed the ongoing Comprehensive Strategic Political-Military Plan (CSPMP)

review, and the SYG tasked the Policy Coordination Group to provide Foreign and Defense Ministers with an assessment and update of the plan at future ministerial meetings. Asked about recent criticism of the impartiality of the IEC from Speaker of the Lower House Qanuni, Gentilini said the recent political atmosphere has become more polarized between Qanuni and Karzai, but Qanuni unequivocally supported free, fair elections in 2009. The CMC responded to a question about rumors of higher-than-usual numbers of fighters remaining in Afghanistan over the winter, noting that COMISAF's plan for Operation Tolo includes contingencies to contain the fight if activity increases, and to prevent the enemy from reconstituting over the winter.

Balkans

(C/NF) Balkans: The SYG emphasized the importance of the NAC visit to Kosovo scheduled for 4 November. He reported that EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Solana on 27 October privately expressed confidence that Belgrade would consent to the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) deployment by late November and that EULEX would be operational throughout Kosovo in December.

(C) The SYG urged Allies to make formal offers to the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) Trust Fund, and CMC warned that the KSF

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standup process would almost certainly be delayed if 11 million euros in contributions were not forthcoming by early December. In response, Ambassador Volker said he was hopeful the U.S. would have 2.5 million dollars available for the KSF within the next few weeks and an additional 5 million dollars in the spring. Germany announced that it planned to support the KSF with 7 million euros worth of vehicles, equipment, and funds. The Czech PermRep stressed the need for a publicity campaign throughout Kosovo to attract civilian recruits*and especially minorities*for the KSF. He also expressed satisfaction with SYG's statement that he was exploring possibilities for allowing flexibility to designate KSF contributions toward civilian or military requirements.

(C) Admiral Di Paola reported that KFOR has transferred 17 members of its staff to the Military Civilian Advisory Division (MCAD), which oversees execution of KFOR's new tasks of demobilizing the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) and standing up the KSF, to make up for a lack of Allied personnel contributions. In response to a query by the Spanish PermRep, Admiral Di Paola said he was not aware of the transfers having any significant negative impact on KFOR's ability to perform its core mission and asserted that the transfers were appropriate given the importance of accomplishing the new tasks.

Africa

(C/NF) Africa: The Council received its first operational briefing on the counter-piracy and WFP escort missions of elements of Standing NATO Maritime Group-2 (SNMG-2). The group arrived in the Gulf of Aden on 20 October, and on 23 October split in two. Task Group Allied Provider, consisting of ITS Durand de la Penne, HS Themistokles and HMS Cumberland are performing escort and counter-piracy duties, while the remainder of the SNMG continued on to the Persian Gulf. Also on the 23rd, the Canadian frigate HMCS Ville de Quebec formally handed over WFP escort duties to SNMG-2.

(C) Themistokles is currently escorting a WFP food shipment to Somalia; Durand de la Penne escorted the M/V Rozen, carrying supplies for the AU mission in Somalia, to Mogadishu from 25-27 October; and Cumberland is undertaking counter-piracy surveillance and deterrence operations in the

region.

(C) The SHAPE briefer also noted the imminent arrival in the region of Russian frigate Neustrashimyy in the Gulf of Aden. Ambassador Volker asked whether there had been any coordination with Neustrashimyy; the Chairman of the Military Committee replied that there had not, but that it would be normal and "proper" for tactical coordination to take place. The SYG concluded the discussion by noting that public diplomacy assets were already in place and producing broadcast materials on Allied Provider.

Iraq

(C/NF) Iraq: The SYG observed that it is vital for NATO to ensure the legal continuity of NTM-I past the December 31 expiry of the UNSCR. He added that SACEUR has sent him a letter recommending that NATO immediately engage the Iraqi authorities on this issue. The SYG said he feels that "the moment is here" to start negotiations and he will give the IS the necessary authority to move forward. Clearly the NATO negotiations will be held "in the context" of the ongoing USG-GOI SOFA negotiations and this bilateral SOFA will be the basis for NATO's own agreement, he observed, but NATO cannot delay in focusing on its own legal requirements.

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(C/NF) Ambassador Volker gave an update on the USG-GOI SOFA negotiations and stressed that the agreement text is "closed" in Washington's opinion and though we can accept textual edits, substantive changes are not acceptable at this point. Iraqi authorities have reviewed the text of the agreement, but the Iraqi cabinet may have some proposed changes. Volker continued that the negotiations are made more complicated by how the Iraqi political parties are looking at each other and seeking political advantage via the SOFA with the U.S. The Ambassador concluded that Washington is optimistic that the negotiations will be concluded in the next few weeks and concurs with the SYG that the USG-GOI bilateral agreement will be the basis for NATO's agreement.

(C/NF) Italian PermRep followed to say that his country supports the SYG's way forward and, like SACEUR, feels now is the time to start negotiations. He added that NATO must protect its personnel on the ground and the NATO-Iraq agreement should be completed before December 31st.

(C/NF) Response to Terrorism: no discussion

Transformation

(C/NF) Transformation: The SYG outlined his roadmap for addressing defense transformation issues in the run up to the February Defense Ministerial in Krakow: additional POL-MIL options for the NRF, Reserve Forces, Multi-national Approaches to Capability Development, Innovative Funding Arrangements, Reform of the Defense Planning Processes, PE Review, Missile Defense, work on the Norwegian paper on making NATO more relevant. He stated that this is a very ambitious work plan and that the timelines will be close.

(C/NF) Hungary welcomed the addition of transformation to the regular NC agenda, but worried about the NAC's workload. The Hungarian Perm Rep stated that perhaps the best way to take ownership of transformation is to have regular updates on how the Alliance is doing on implementing the CPG. The UK Perm rep supported Hungary's views, but said he wanted to focus more on identified shortfalls such as deployable C2, medical assets and airbase activation modules. Only specific issues should come to the NAC level when the committees that are working them reach a political impasse.

(C/NF) Norway, Turkey, and France also expressed concerns about workload. Several nations, including Denmark, France, Slovakia, and Poland, stressed the need to respect existing procedures. Turkey added that the NAC needs to balance the requirement for article 5 operations and deployed operations. Canada expressed concern about a credibility gap for the Alliance if it does not fix the PE review and the NRF in time for the Summit, given the public profile of these issues. Germany cautioned that in many cases the NAC does not understand transformation issues sufficiently to make informed decisions.

(C/NF) The SYG summarized the discussion by stating that he believes that the NAC can add value on political issues involved in transformation, but must let the working bodies work the details. The SYG will come back next week with a recommendation, based on the UK/Hungarian non-paper on transformation, on how to involve the NAC in transformation issues. It appears that this will mainly take place through briefings by CMC and ASG-DPP on the various issues on the roadmap.

Statements on Political Subjects

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(C/NF) Statements on Political Subjects: The French PermRep reported on EU participation in the recent Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit, chaired by China in Beijing, which discussed major current global issues, specifically the financial crisis. She also noted French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner's travel to St. Petersburg for the recent EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council meeting, in which he talked with Russian officials and made preparations for the upcoming 13 November EU-Russia Summit. Updating on the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, the PermRep noted that the first phase of the mission is considered complete with Russian withdrawal of troops from the buffer regions outside South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The French PermRep lastly brought to attention a statement by the EU Presidency welcoming the 27-28 October Peace Jirga held in Islamabad between Afghan and Pakistani leaders aimed at building bilateral dialogue and cooperation between the two neighbors.

(C/NF) Ambassador Volker provided an update on UN activities, briefing on the upcoming Italian-led United Nations Security Council trip to Afghanistan on October 12-18. Volker said noted that the trip should underscore the need for additional resources for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Any Other Business

(C/NF) Any Other Business: Slovakia and Bulgaria announced that the accession protocols for Albania and Croatia have been ratified by their respective national procedures. Croatian and Albanian PermReps thanked the two nations and also extended thanks to the U.S. for President Bush's signature of Albanian and Croatian accession protocols at a White House signing ceremony last week.
VOLKER